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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST IDEOLOGUE SURFACES IN CAPITAL;
CONDEMNS US INTERFERENCE

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Since his return to the capital March 28, Maoist ideologue and second-ranking leader Baburam Bhattarai has conducted a media blitz, appearing at two consecutive press conferences, a Reporters' Club ceremony, and a popular television talk show. In his appearances so far, Bhattarai has castigated the Government for alleged ceasefire violations, emphasized that the Maoists have not given up on their goal of a republic, pressed the demand for a constituent assembly, and criticized the US for "interfering" in Nepal's internal affairs. The Maoists seek "mutually beneficial relations" with all nations, Bhattarai told reporters, and may seek meetings with diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Absent from Bhattarai's statements thus far has been any regret for Maoist excesses or any detailed explanation of the proposed constituent assembly. End summary.

BABURAM'S BACK

[1](#)2. (U) Maoist ideologue and second-ranking leader Baburam Bhattarai entered Kathmandu publicly on the afternoon of March 28 for the first time since the beginning of the seven-year insurgency. Since then, Bhattarai has conducted a virtual media marathon, staging consecutive press conferences on March 29 and 30, distributing prizes at a Reporters' Club ceremony (where he shared the dais and shook hands with Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand) on March 31, and appearing on a popular television talk show (hosted by a former Humphrey Fellow) the night of March 31. Bhattarai, whom the Maoists nominated to head their negotiating team, reportedly also met with Nepali Congress President and former Prime Minister G.P. Koirala on March 30, and was scheduled to meet Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML) General Secretary Madhav Nepal the following day.

CLAIMS CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IS MEANS TO NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM

[1](#)3. (U) In his press conferences on March 29 and 30, where he was flanked by fellow Politburo members Ram Bahadur Thapa (aka Badal), the Maoists' military strategist, Dev Gurung, Krishna Mahara, and Matrika Yadav, Bhattarai stressed that the Maoists have not relinquished their long-term goal of establishing a communist republic. In light of the current situation, which Bhattarai described as one of "strategic balance," the Maoists have amended their near-term objectives to realization of "a new democratic system" transcending "regressive alternatives," in which the interests of the downtrodden (e.g., members of ethnic minorities, the lower castes, women) will be fully represented. The three existing political forces (the Maoists, the parliamentary parties, and the Palace) must each be involved in achieving this resolution. This new democratic model will be the "logical" outcome of a three-step process, according to Bhattarai, that begins with a round-table conference "of all sides." In the Maoist schematic, an interim government will "emanate" from the round-table conference, which will in turn oversee elections to a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. A new constitution is imperative, Bhattarai claimed, because "a constitutional vacuum" exists at present and "no constitutional structure is in place." The new political system will represent "all forces and movements," he declaimed to his audience on March 30, and will "go beyond the present multiparty system. We are absolutely clear there will be no return to the status quo." He did not, however, offer details of how the proposed new system would differ from the multiparty system.

CRITICIZES GON

14. (U) Bhattarai opened his March 29 address by reiterating stock Maoist criticism of the Government of Nepal (GON) for failing to create "a conducive environment" for dialogue. Instead, the GON is trying "to prolong the ceasefire for an indefinite period," Bhattarai charged, accusing it of violating the terms of the ceasefire "by engaging in unnecessary searches, arrests, and interference in peaceful political programs" and declining to release Maoist "prisoners of war."

SUGGESTS KING ABDICATE

15. (U) Bhattarai also took the opportunity to replay another recurrent Maoist theme in recent public statements--heated denials that the Maoists had struck a "secret" deal with the Palace or held clandestine meetings with the King. In his remarks to members of the foreign and domestic press corps on March 30, Bhattarai was quoted as claiming that the Maoists had made a number of significant compromises to their original demands and called on the King to show similar "flexibility." When pressed to define the extent of such flexibility, Bhattarai reportedly suggested that the King could abdicate his throne.

CHARGES US INTERFERENCE,
BUT WANTS TO MEET

16. (SBU) Speaking on March 30, Bhattarai declared that the Maoists, mindful of the "sensitive geo-political" position of their country between Indian and China, would strive to have "cordial and mutually beneficial relations" with all foreign countries, including their giant neighbors, based on "principles of peaceful coexistence." He appealed to the international community to help "materialize" the Maoist proposal for a constituent assembly as the "most democratic option right now." To that end, he said he hoped to meet with the US, Indian, Chinese, British and EU "missions" in Kathmandu. (Note: We have not been approached about such a meeting. End note.) That said, the US should not interfere in Nepal's internal affairs, he warned, adding that America is "unnecessarily" interested in Nepal.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) Bhattarai's appearance in Kathmandu is a telling indication of the importance the Maoists are placing on possible negotiations. Despite the suspense surrounding Bhattarai's long-anticipated return to Kathmandu, however, the Maoists' most authoritative wordsmith had little new or surprising to say. Noticeably absent from his rather lengthy remarks was any acknowledgement of or regret for the damage and suffering wrought by the Maoists in their seven-year insurgency. Also missing was any discussion of the purported deficiencies of the current Constitution that warrant scrapping it, or how the "new" political system will ensure the rights of the disadvantaged and underserved for whom the Maoists claim to speak.

MALINOWSKI